

## Attorney Reports Sirhan Plans to Keep on Fighting

Jury Sent Back to Hotel Room for Night

T.P. 4/18/68  
By ARTHUR EVERETT

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Sirhan Bishara Sirhan told his lawyer Tuesday that he is ready to keep on fighting, regardless of the outcome of his trial for the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

"This is only the start," defense attorney Russell Parsons quoted Sirhan, after talking with the defendant in the latter's jail cell. "We'll keep on fighting."

A jury, meanwhile, was pondering Sirhan's fate.

The jurors were sent back to their hotel for the night at 3:55 p.m. PST with no indication of what, if any, progress they made.

"He seemed to be in pretty good shape," Parsons said of his interview with Sirhan. "He asked me when I thought the jury might reach a decision, and how did I feel. I told him I felt encouraged but the jury must be talking the case over."

Parsons said he then gave Sirhan five \$1 bills for cigarettes and magazines after the defendant told him he needed some money.

The jurors got the case at 2:55 p.m. Monday and their first assignment was selection of a foreman. They chose juror No. 8, Bruce D. Elliott, a young bachelor with a Ph.D. degree who is a systems analyst for an electronics firm.

The seven men and five women were not required to go beyond the issue of first or second-degree murder. The defense asked for second degree, punishable by five years to life in prison. An acquittal was not requested.

The state sought a first-degree verdict, which provides for death in the gas chamber or life imprisonment, with the jury making a choice in separate, subsequent deliberations.

The 25-year-old Arab defendant shot Kennedy in the Ambassador Hotel June 5, 1968, while the New York senator was campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination.

The defense claims Sirhan was mentally impaired, in a trance and angered over what he considered Kennedy's support for the Israeli cause in the Middle East conflict with the Arabs.

An Arabic daily newspaper in Sirhan's native Jerusalem published an open letter Tuesday to the trial court, attributing it to the defendant's father, Bishara Sirhan, 55. The father returned to Jordan soon after immigrating to the United States with his family in 1957.

"I don't want to say my son is innocent and that he didn't kill Kennedy," the elder Sirhan was quoted as writing, "but I want to stress that my son aimed to kill political ideas which were aiming to pour more tension in the Middle East and adding to more bloodshed in the area. . .

"My son shot, but not at flesh and blood. He meant to kill the American policy which is causing harm to the American people and to the peace of the world."

Chief Deputy Dist. Atty. Lynn D. Compton, who led the prosecution of Sirhan, replied to the letter: "As far as the idea that he was shooting down political ideas — regardless of the feeling of any individual in this country as to the merits and demerits of any particular governmental policy — the democratic society cannot tolerate the resort to physical force of any degree to bring about any given political result."

While the jury deliberated, the slight, dark-haired Sirhan

waited out a decision in a windowless 6-by-8 foot cell on the 13th floor of the Hall of Justice four floors above the jury room.

The jury deliberated 65 minutes Monday before being sent to a midtown hotel for the night. They were back in the courthouse at 8:15 a.m.

The magnitude of the jurors' task was emphasized by a court record of over 8,800 pages, plus 154 exhibits. They heard 90 witnesses during a trial which began Jan. 7.

The jury's 20-by-30 foot deliberation room is air-conditioned and has wall-to-wall carpeting. The jurors sat in 12 upholstered chairs around two tables pushed together.

In the room were a water cooler and an electric urn to heat water for coffee and tea.

A single buzzer is connected to the courtroom. Two rings means the jurors want to return to court for instructions or assistance. Three means a verdict.

Note quotes from father.